

Story 1521 (1981 Tape 9)

Narrator: Ali Çiftçi, farmer;
in mid-60s by this
time

Location: Çıkırıkçı village,
Sarıkaya kaza,
Yozgat Province

Date: 1981

Shu'ayıp¹ and Moses

The Blessed Shu'ayıp was a blind man who had three daughters. Because of his blindness, he used to perform his prayer services at home. One day a beggar came to ask for alms from Shu'ayıp, and that beggar said, "If you do not give me what I have asked for, then may you be one of those who hears the call to prayers but does not go to the mosque." After that Shu'ayıp had a special path made between his home and the mosque, by following that path, he was able to attend the prayer services

Shu'ayıp's three daughters used to herd his flock of sheep. They took the sheep to the well in the pasture from which all the shepherds in the area took water for their flocks.

¹A shadowy figure of very early mythical time. Although he is mentioned several times in the Koran, it is thought that Mohammed did not know much about him. See Notes for this tale, which include a page on this prophet taken from the original edition of the Encyclopaedia of Islam. In Exodus 2, verses 16-21 contain a parallel story. Reuel, a priest of Midian, had seven daughters who tended his sheep. Male shepherds drove the girls and their flocks away from the watering troughs. Moses, having just fled from the Pharaoh, went to the girls' defense and enabled them to water their flocks. Reuel married his daughter Zipporah to Moses. Some scholars claim that the name Reuel was merely a gloss and that the priest's actual name was Jethro.

Story 1521

one day some male shepherds covered the mouth of the well with large rocks. Those rocks were too heavy for the three girls to move. It so happened that at that very time Moses came along during his flight from the Egyptian pharaoh. Saying, "Bismillah,"² he pulled the rocks from the mouth of the well. Then he lifted out water with which the girls could water their sheep.

The girls said to Moses, "Brother, we do not have a shepherd. Will you herd our sheep for us?" When Moses agreed to do this, the girls took him to Shu'ayip. Moses remained there simply as a shepherd for the first year, and then during the second year he married one of Shu'ayip's daughters. Then Shu'ayip said to him, "If you will stay for another year, I shall give you all of the male lambs born in our flock." Moses agreed to that. If Shu'ayip had 1,000 ewes, then all of them bore male lambs that year, and all 1,000 of them were given to Moses. "Stay here for another year, and I shall give all of the female lambs born during that time." They remained there that year too, and if Shu'ayip had a thousand ewes, each of them bore a female lamb that year. During that year

²Bismillah (in the name of Allah) is the first part of the expression with which the Koran opens, Bismillahirrahman-irrahim (In the name of Allah, the Compassionate and Merciful). The full expression is used at the beginning of prayer services. Bismillah is usually uttered at the beginning of any undertaking in order to gain divine approval (or good luck) for that venture

Story 1521

Moses' wife died, and he then married one of his sisters-in-law.

When Moses left that place to travel to his own home, his new wife was pregnant. They had not gone very far before she gave birth to a child. Moses said, "I shall go somewhere and get some fire so that we can keep the baby warm. I see a light a short distance from here."

As he got closer to the place where he had seen the light, he discovered that there was no fire there at all. What he had seen was the reflection of God which had fallen upon Mount Tabo.³ When he reached that place, he heard a voice say, "O Moses, I am your God, and I have chosen you to be my prophet." God had much earlier chosen Moses to oppose the pharaoh of Egypt, and I must tell you now how that happened.

As a year-old baby, Moses had once tugged very hard on the pharaoh's beard. This was an especially dangerous thing to do at that particular time because the pharaoh was alarmed about babies. A geomancer⁴ had warned the pharaoh a year earlier that a boy would be born in Egypt who would become a

³Often known as Mount Tur.

⁴The form of geomancy known to most rural Turks is remil. Remil utilizes several dicelike cubes (sometimes sheep knuckles). On each of the six sides of each cube is inscribed a letter or number or symbol. The cubes are cast upon the ground, and then the uppermost faces are read. The figures on the cube are part of a code of meaning. Sometimes the "meaning" forecasts future

Story

dangerous enemy to him. The pharaoh was frightened at this report and ordered that all boys born that year be put to death at once. When Moses was born, his mother set him afloat in the Nile River in a wooden box lined with cotton on the inside and sealed against water on the outside. The pharaoh's palace was on the Nile bank, and when the box was floating past, Asiye, the pharaoh's wife, saw it and rescued the baby inside it. There were no children in the pharaoh's family, and so Asiye accepted Moses as her own child. But when the baby pulled the pharaoh's beard, the pharaoh was alarmed. He said "I am afraid of this child. I am going to have it killed."

"This is only a baby. He is much too young to behave according to reason," Asiye said.

"Then I shall test him to determine whether or not he acts deliberately and rationally. I shall build a fire and place a heap of gold alongside it. If he reaches out to the fire, then I shall know that he is not capable of reasoning." He had a fire built and had a pile of gold placed alongside it. Then he placed the baby before them. As Moses reached toward the gold, Gabriel suddenly appeared in invisible form and pushed his hand into the fire. Moses took a burning coal from the fire and put it to his mouth, burning his tongue. The tip of events; sometimes it indicates the location of a lost or stolen object; sometimes it may identify a thief or other culprit.

Story 1521

his tongue was burned, and that is why Moses was a stutterer for the rest of his life.

When God on Mount Tabo had called upon Moses to be His prophet, Moses had replied, "My God, if you will make my brother Aaron⁵ my assistant, I shall agree to be your prophet. We shall fight the pharaoh together."

Shortly after that, the pharaoh fell into the sea and was drowned. When news of this reached Moses, he reported it to his people. His people, however, were so afraid of the pharaoh that they refused to believe the news unless they saw evidence of his death with their own eyes. Then God commanded the sea to cast the pharaoh's body ashore. Then the people knew for certain that the pharaoh was dead.

⁵The Arabic and Turkish word for Aaron is Harun.